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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Secretary Rice to Europe -
Baghdad U.S. Foreign Policy Israel
PARIS - Monday, April 03, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Secretary Rice to Europe - Baghdad

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U.S. Foreign Policy
Israel

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

While the general press focuses once again on the new labor legislation, the CPE, and President Chirac's decision to promulgate it, albeit with amendments, despite popular opposition and the threat tomorrow of a new day of strikes and protest, the economic press leads with the Alcatel-Lucent merger. In Liberation, the group's new executive officer, Patricia Russo, is profiled in an article entitled "A Daunting American in Paris - Roussio is well known for her brutal restructuring measures."

Most editorials comment on President Chirac's lackluster 'hedging' (Le Monde), or on the contrary on the need for the unions and "trouble makers" to back off "because President Chirac has given in on their two major demands" (Le Figaro). Liberation points to the absurdity of the situation, which it calls an "imbroglio:" "the official text promulgating the CPE was published yesterday, immediately after the President announced that a major part of that law was to be discarded. The imbroglio remains and as the situation worsens the political crisis could well turn into a major crisis for the regime." For its Sunday front page, Aujourd'hui en France led with a poll showing that French viewers of the Chirac speech were harsh in their judgment: 62% were unconvinced by him, and 56% deemed his proposed amendments unsatisfactory. Some 54% want the unions to continue their push for repeal of the CPE, compared to 39% who want the unions to end their movement.

In Les Echos, senior political analyst Jacques Hubert-Rodier pens an op-ed entitled "A Shift in the Bush 'Revolution'" based on the latest National Security Strategy report. In Le Journal du Dimanche Gilles Delafon entitles his column "Condi Rice's Avowed Mistake" in reference to her speech in Blackburn while France Soir and Le Figaro note her "surprise trip to Baghdad." (See Part C)

In Liberation Israeli writer and essayist Amos Oz pens an op-ed entitled "The Sad Choice of Unilateral Pullout." (See Part C)

In popular right-of-center Le Parisien, Christophe Dubois reports on former Guantanamo detainee Nizar Sassi's book, "Prisoner 325, Camp Delta" and Sassi's "intention" to "question the U.S. Army." "The initiative could trigger diplomatic turbulence between France and the U.S. Sassi's lawyers, along with those of Mourad Benchallali, also a former detainee, have asked the investigating justice to travel to Guantanamo. They claim this is 'indispensable' in order to 'conduct the necessary hearings and to observe the facts.' The lawyers also want to interview Red Cross officials. and expect the French magistrates to look into France's attitude on Guantanamo through depositions of high French officials who negotiated the liberation of the French detainees with the U.S." The article also details some of the 'humiliations' inflicted on the detainees as portrayed in Sassi's book.

This morning France 2 television announced that French travelers to the U.S. will begin to get French biometric passports as of this week, thus allowing them to travel visa-free. The report also emphasized that not all French citizens needed the new document, and that machine-readable passports delivered before October 26, 2005 were valid for visa-free travel until they expired.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Secretary Rice to Europe - Baghdad

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"Rice and Straw Parachute Into Iraq"

Right-of-center France Soir (04/03): "Is it a sign that it was pouring rain when Condoleezza Rice and Jack Straw arrived in Baghdad yesterday?. Was it a coincidence that just as Condoleezza Rice was arriving in Baghdad, since the visit was a surprise and the guerillas could not have had word of it, that an American helicopter was shot down?"

"Jaafari Under Pressure"

Right-of-center Le Figaro (04/03): "Secretary Rice and Jack Straw, in Baghdad on a surprise visit, have increased pressure to help Iraq out of the political impasse it is in. They are discussing with the top Iraqi leaders. Secretary Rice is trying not to give the impression that the U.S. wants to impose one candidate over another at the head of the Iraqi government."

"Condi Rice's Avowed Mistake"

Gilles Delafon in right-of-center Le Journal du Dimanche (04/02): "Condi Rice, who weighs every word, could not have slipped up, when she acknowledge that the U.S. made `thousands of tactical mistakes.' even if protesters outside were clamoring for her to `go home' and even if Douglas Hurd had just said without mincing his words that `the world could turn only if the only super-power followed the rules like everyone else.' Secretary Rice's sudden clarity, all in her honor, triggered so much reaction that she had to bring some clarification: `yes, we made mistakes, but toppling Saddam or triggering the forces of democracy in the Middle East was not one of them.' No strategic errors, then, just tactical ones. While democratizing the Middle East may be an honorable intention, the use of military superiority to end up in chaos can legitimately be questioned. Let us forget about President Bush's lies and prevarication, but what of the tactical errors? Who in the Pentagon is bearing responsibility for them? Rumsfeld is still there and Wolfowitz has simply been promoted. It is clear that at this stage President Bush cannot afford to acknowledge that mistakes were made. Rice cannot be bothered with details: `you cannot waste time analyzing each tactical decision, because you lose the overall vision.' Self-examination will come later. Colin Powell showed the way."

U.S. Foreign Policy

"A Shift in the Bush `Revolution'"

Jacques Hubert-Rodier in right-of-center Le Echos (04/03): "For Washington, terrorism remains the number one threat. At first glance the NSS does not introduce any significant changes. The notion of `preemptive' action remains, despite the questions it raised in France when applied to Iraq. For President Bush, Iran has replaced Iraq in 2006 as the most threatening country for the U.S. Washington's accusations against Iran are to a large extent equally recognized by the Europeans. But the question of how to deal with the Iranian crisis is central. Diplomacy is clearly favored, and the U.S. is adding a dose of multilateralism, thus bringing its support to the as yet unproductive efforts made by the EU and Russia. While nothing changes in America's strategy, everything is changing. Washington is discreetly shifting its national security strategy. While Bush does not give up on the use of force, he recognizes the importance of ideological combat. In Iraq and the region, Washington's margin of maneuver is limited. The report itself notes how difficult it is to promote democracy in the Middle East. While all eyes were on Iraq, Iran took advantage of the situation and pursued its clandestine nuclear program. By putting Iran in the line of fire, there is again the risk of ignoring other real long term threats."

Israel

"The Sad Choice of Unilateral Pullout"

Amos Oz in left-of-center Liberation (04/03): "For the first time since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, a majority of Israelis have shown they are ready to abandon the occupied territories. They are ready but without enthusiasm, moved more by reality than conviction. Their priorities have changed, materialism having replaced their hunger for more land. Israel's growing inequalities has shifted the nation's priority. For those of us who still believe in peace, Olmert's unilateral separation from the Palestinians is a sad choice. But there is another way: if Israel cannot negotiate with Hamas, it can turn to the Arab League. Its members are just as eager to find a long lasting solution as Israel. Instead of a unilateral pullout Israel can collaborate with Egypt and Saudi Arabia in favor of a global and durable peace." STAPLETON